

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /031 W
----- 017393

R 230842Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1630
INFO USINT CAIRO

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 1073

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR XF EG

SUBJ: DEBORCHGRAVE'S OFF-RECORD INTERVIEW WITH SADAT FEBRUARY 4.

1. SUMMARY. DE BORCHGRAVE OF NEWSWEEK HAS READ TO ME HIS RECONSTRUCTION OF HIS OFF-RECORD INTERVIEW FEB 4 OF SADAT, ABOUT WHICH DE BORCHGRAVE SAID NO US OFFICIAL WAS AS YET INFORMED. (HE DECLINED TO GIVE US A COPY). ACCORDING TO DE BORCHGRAVE, SADAT TOLD HIM HE REFRAINED FROM RENEWING WAR AFTER OCT 22 CEASEFIRE BECAUSE SECRETARY CONVINCED HIM ISRAELIS WERE NOW READY TO RETURN SINAI TO EGYPT UNDER POLITICAL SETTLEMENT; HE HAD TRIED HARD TO PERSUADE SYRIANS TO HAND OVER POW LIST; ASAD WAS PRAGMATIC MAN WHO WANTED SETTLEMENT WITH ISRAEL; HE HAD DECIDED TO LAUNCH WAR AGAINST ISRAEL IN DEC 1971, OCT 1972; AND APRIL 1973; BUT EVENTS INTERVENED; REASON HE EXPELLED SOVIETS IN JULY 1972 WAS TO ENSURE THEY WOULD GET NO CREDIT FOR SUCCESS OF ARAB ARMS AND ALSO TO OPEN WAY FOR RAPPROCHEMENT WITH US-- SADAT'S MAJOR GOAL; SADAT VIEWS HIS PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH SECRETARY AS OF US MOST IMPORTANCE AND HAS COMPLETE TRUST IN HIM; AND SADAT WILL BE WILLING TO CONSIDER ALTERNATIONS IN EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI BOUNDARY. END SUMMARY.

2. NEWSWEEK EDITOR DE BORCHGRAVE AT FEB 20 MEETING WITH ME AND A FEW MEMBERS OF MY STAFF READ ACCOUNT OF HIS FEB 4 OFF-RECORD INTERVIEW WITH SADAT WHICH HE HAD PREPARED FROM MEMORY AND NOT FROM NOTES, IN DIRECT QUOTATION MODE, AND WHICH HE

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INSISTED HE HAD NOT HAD OCCASION PREVIOUSLY TO DESCRIBE TO ANYONE FROM USG. DE BORCHGRAVE SAID TWO OTHER COPIES OF RECORD EXISTED BESIDES HIS OWN COPY, AND THEY WERE IN THE HANDS OF

OSBORNE ELLIOTT AND EDWARD KLEIN OF NEWSWEEK MAIN OFFICE, NEW YORK. KAY GRAHAM OF NEWSWEEK HAD ALSO SEEN IT. (WE ASKED K WE COULD MAKE A COPY, AND HE DECLINED.) BELOW IS JOINT EFFORT BY THOSE PRESENT TO RECONSTRUCT INTERVIEW TEXT WHICH DE BORCHAGRAVE READ TO US. THERE WERE MANY INTERESTING POINTS WHICH WE ARE UNABLE TO RECOLLECT, AND DEPARTMENT MIGHT WISH TO SEEK TEXT IN NEW YORK. DE BORCHGRAVE MENTIONED THAT HE HAD READ TEST WHILE IN ISRAEL TO DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER ALLON, TRANSPORT MINISTER PERES, AND MORDECHAI GAZIT OF PM'S OFFICE.

3. QUESTION-- MANY PEOPLE IN CAIRO WERE WONDERING HOW EGYPT COULD AFFORD TO HAVE MADE SO PMANY POLITICAL CONCESSIONS RIGHT AFTER THE WAR.

ANSWER--IT IS TRUE THAT WE COULD HAVE PULVERIZED ISRAEL SALIENT WEST OF CANAL AT ANY TIME. WE HAD ANTI-TANK WEAPONS ZEROED IN ON THE 400 ISRAELI TANKS IN SALIENT, ALMOST ALL OF WHICH WERE DUG INTO FIXED POSITIONS. MOREOVER, WE HAD 800 TANKS READY TO CRUSH REMMUNING ISRAELI FORCES IN SALIENT AFTER INITIAL ANTI-TANK BARRAGE. BUT SECRETARY KISSINGER CONVINCED ME THAT ISRAEL HAD LEARNED LESSON IN OCTOBER AND WAS READY NOW TO RETURN SINAI TO EGYPT. I SAY THAT WAR WAS NO ANSWER.

4. QUESTION--WHY DO SYRIANS REFUSE TO TRANSMIT POW LIST TO ISRAEL? THIS WOULD BE SIMPLE HUMANITARIAN ACT WHICH WOULD NOT DEPRIVE SYRIA OF LEVERAGE FROM CONTINUING RETENTION OF ISRAELI POWS THEMSELVES.

ANSWER--I MADE SAME POINT WITH SYRIANS, WHO ANSWERED THAT NORTH VIETNAMESE HAD PROVEN THAT EVEN POW LIST COULD PROVIDE POLITICAL LEVERAGE. I DISABUSED SYRIANS OF THIS IDEA BY EXPLAINING THAT HANOI HAD HELD BACK NAMES OF ONLY 20 PERCENT OF AMERICAN POWS IN THEIR HANDS. BUT I WAS ABLE TO MAKE LITTLE IMPACT ON SYRIANS. SYRIANS UNFORTUNATELY HAVE ADOPTED COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP FEATURE OF SOVIET SYSTEM AND IT IS DIFFICULT FOR SYRIAN GOVERNMENT TO REACH DECISIONS. ASAD HAS PROBLEMS I DO NOT HAVE; IN EGYPT I MAKE ALL THE DECISIONS, AND THAT IS WAY IT SHOULD BE. NEVERTHELESS, ASAD IS A REASONABLE AND PRAGMATIC MAN

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WHO WANTS TO MOVE CLOSER TO WEST AND REACH SETTLEMENT WITH ISRAEL, AND DAMASCUS IS GRADUALLY MOVING IN RIGHT DIRECTION.

5. QUESTION--EGYPT HAS COME OUT STRONGLY IN FAVOR OF PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION IN GENEVA CONFERENCE AND HAS STRESSED VAGUE DEMAND FOR RESTORATION OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS AS ONE OF TWO CARDINAL PILLARS OF EGYPTIAN POSITION. MIGHT THIS EMPHASIS ON PALESTINIANS CREAT OBSTACLE TO PROGRESS, AND WHAT IN FACT DOES EGYPT HAVE IN MIND AS PALESTINIAN SOLUTION?

ANSWER-- I HAVE GIVEN MUCHTHOUGH TO PALESTINIAN FACTOR, AND I

BELIEVE IT CAN BE SOLVED. COME BACK TO SEE ME ON MARCH 6,
AND I WILL DESCRIBE MY STRATEGY TO YOU.

6. QUESTION --WHEN DID YOU REACH DECISION TO START WAR
OF LAST OCTOBER, AND IS IT NOT TRUE THAT SOVIETS HAD NOTHING
WHATEVER TO DO WITH YOU MAKING DECISION? I REMEMBER VERY WELL
TWO PREVIOUS DECISIONS WHICH I AM SURE YOU TOOK TO LAUNCH WAR WITH
ISRAEL IN ORDER TO COMPEL INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO HELP
BRING ABOUT SETTLEMENT IN AREA. FIRST TIME WAS IN DECEMBER
1971. I KNEW ABOUT THAT DECISION BECAUSE IN LATE NOVEMBER YOU
CABLED ME WHILE I WAS IN INDIA TO COME IMMEDIATELY
TO CAIRO FOR IMPORTANT INTERVIEW, AND THEN WHEN I ARRIVED, YOU
SEND WORD TO ME THAT OUTBREAK OF INDO-PAKISTANI WAR HAD ELIMINATED
REASON FOR INTERVIEW. I BELIEVE YOUR SECOND DECISION WAS TO START
WAR IN NOVEMBER 1972, AND I THINK YOU REVERSED THE DECISION
BECAUSE OF ARRIVAL IN ISRAEL OF NEW AMERICAN ARMS.

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /031 W

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R 230842Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1631
INFO USINT CAIRO

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 1073

EXDIS

ANSWER--YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY CORRECT ABOUT MY REVERSAL OF
DECEMBER 1971 DECISION, AND YOU ARE ALMOST CORRECT IN CASE OF
FALL OF 1972. MY DECISION ACTUALLY HAD BEEN TO LAUNCH WAR IN
OCTOBER 1972, BUT MY THEN WAR MINISTER SADEK WASTED
THREE WHOLE MONTHS BY DOING NOTHING ON WAR PREPARATIONS. I
THEN SACKED HIM, AND IT TOOK MY NEW WAR MINISTER AND ME
MONTHS TO CLEAN OUT MESS IN EGYPTIAN ARMED FORCES WHICH SADEK
HAD LEFT BEHIND. IN BEGINNING OF 1973 I ISSUED NEW ORDERS
TO PREPARE FOR WAR TO BEGIN IN APRIL. INTERVENING EVENTS, WHICH
I SHALL EXPLAIN TO YOU AT SOME FUTURE TIME, PREVENTED FULFILLMENT
OF THAT PLAN. YOU ARE ENTIRELY CORRECT THAT SOVIETS HAD NOTHING TO DO
WITH WAR OF LAST OCTOBER AND IN FACT WERE NOT CONSULTED. A MAJOR
REASON FOR MY EXCLUSION OF SOVIET ADVISORS IN JULY 1972, AS MATTER
OF FACT, WAS TO ENSURE THE WHOLE WORLD WOULD UNDERSTAND WHEN I
LAUNCHED WAR I PLANNED IN OCTOBER 1972 THAT SOVIETS HAD HAD NOTHING
TO DO WITH IT. I WANTED EVERYONE TO KNOW THIS WAS AN ARAB-
PLANNED AND ARAB-EXECUTED VICTORY, WITHOUT ANY CREDIT GOING TO

SOVIETS, AS OTHERWISE IT WOULD BE WASTE OF TIME. I ALSO DID NOT WANT COLD WAR TENSIONS TO GET IN WAY OF MY EFFORT TO GALVANICE WORLD COMMUNITY INTO CONCERTED DIRVE TO BRING ABOUT MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT, I WORKED DAY AND NIGHT IN SEPTEMBER 1973 ON DETAILS OF WAR PREPARATIONS. COMING WAR WAS SO IMPORTANT IN MY MIND THAT WHEN I RECEIVED DAVID ROCKEFELLER IN SETEMBER AND HE PROPOSED OPENING BANK IN CAIRO ON FIRST OF OCTOBER. I REPLIED THAT HE SHOULD POSTPONE DECISION UNTIL AFTER OCT SI--I CAUGHT MYSELF REVEALING WAR'S OPENING DATE IN NICK OF TIME. THIS WAS FORTUNATE BECAUSE IF I HAD LET DATE SLIP, I WOULD HAVE HAD TO DETAIN

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ROCKEFELLER IN CAIRO UNTIL OCT6.

7. (ZSME REPLY CONTINUED,) AS FOR 1973 WAR, IT WAS ESSENTIAL TO ME TO MAKE ABSOLUTELY CLEAR TO WASHINGTON THAT SOVIETS HAD NOT LET ME TO THIS ACTION. OTHERWISE, MY MAJOR STRATEGIC GOAL OF US-EGYPTIAN RAPPROCHEMENT, WHICH I HAVE BEEN STRIVING FOR EVER SINCE BECOMING PRESIDENT, WOULD HAVE BEEN THWARTED, RECENTLY SECRETARY KISSINGER WARNED ME THAT SOME PEOPLE IN PENTAGON STILL LOOK UPON EGYPT AS SOVIET BASE. I SAID IN AMAZEMENT TO SECRETARY I COULD NOT UNDERSTAND THIS IN VIEW OF FACT I HAD EXPELLED 20,000 SOVIET ADVISORS IN SUMMER 1972. US, ISRAEL, AND WHOLE WORLD MINUNDERSTOOD MY REASON FOR EXPELLING SOVIETS--I WANTED RAPPROCHEMENT WITH US. SECRETARY REPLIED THAT PRESIDENT NIXON AND HE HIMSELF FULLY UNDERSTOOD THAT I AM MAN OF PEACE, BUT THAT THERE STILL WERE GENERALS AND ADMIRALS WHO FEARED THAT EGYPT WAS SOVIET BASE.

8. QUESTION-- AS I HAVE APPOINTMENT WITH HAIKAL AND UNDERSTAND THAT YOU AND HE ARE NOT SPEAKING TO EACH OTHER, DO YOU HAVE ANY MESSAGE FOR ME TO CONVEY TO HIM? IS MY IMPRESSION CORRECT THAT HIS EDITORIAL OF FEB 1 CRITICIZING SECRETARY KISSINGER AND US WAS STRAW THAT BROKE CAMEL'S BACK FOR YOU?

ANSWER-- YOU CAN TELL HAIKAL THAT HIS NEW OFFICE HAS BEEN READY FOR HIM SINCE DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY, AND I DO WANT HIM TO BECOME MY PRESS ADVISOR. YOUR ANALYSIS IS CORRECT, THAT HIS FEB 1 EDITORIAL WAS TO MUCH. EVERYONE IN EGYPT IS WELCOME TO HAVE VIEWS WHICH DIFFER FROM GOE AND TO VOICE THEM ONCE, BUT NOT TO CONTINUOUSLY CRITIZIZE GOE, AND I WAS FED UP WITH HAIKAL. AS HAIKAL KNOWS, I VIEW MY PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH SECRETARY KISSINGER AS OF EXTREME IMPORTANCE FOR FUTURE OF EGYPT, AND OSBOLUTLEY NO ONE CAN BE ALLOWED TO JEOPARDIZE THAT RELATIONSHIP. SECRETARY IS MAN OF TOTAL INTEGRITY IN WHOM I HAVE COMPLETE CONFIDENCE. HE HAS CONCEPTION OF FUTURE FOR THIS REGION WHICH I HAPPEN TO SHARE.

9. QUESTION--DO YOU NOT THINK YOU OWE IT TO ISRAELIS TO GIVE THEM SOME IDEA OF SHAPE OF PEACE WHICH YOU SAY EGYPT IS NOW PREPARED TO ENTER? DO YOU, FOR EXAMPLE, HAVE IN MIND PROPOSAL OF SOME ADJUSTMENTS IN EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI BORDER?

ANSWER--I CANNOT REVEAL MY STRATEGY TO ISREALIS BEFORE SERIOUS
NEGOTIATIONS EVEN BEGIN. I PERHAPS ALREADY REVEALED TOO MUCH TO

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THEM IN REGARD TO MY WILLINGNESS TO ESTABLISH LASTING PEACE. AS
FOR BORDER ADJUSTMENTS, I AM PREPARED TO CONSIDER MAKING THEM.
IF SHARM EL-SHEIKH IS ALL THAT ISRAELIS ARE WORRIED ABOUT, THERE IS
NO PROBLEM BECAUSE IT IS BAB EL-MANDEB WHICH IS IMPORTANT NOW.
(NOTE: THIS REMARK BY SADAT IN OUR VIEW IS QUITE AMBIGUOUS, AS
IT CAN BE READ TO SUGGEST WITHER THAT EGYPT IS PREPARED TO CEDE
SHARM TO ISREAL OR THAT ISRAEL NO LONGER SHOULD HAVE ANY INTEREST
IN RETAINING SHARM BECAUSE OF BAB.)

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